

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A computer graphical user interface (GUI) displayed on a computer having one or more central processing units, one or more memories, and one or more network connections, the GUI further
5 comprising:

two or more visual categories, each of the visual categories divided into visual subcategories of ordered levels of specificity, each of the ordered levels of specificity grouped into visual districts containing visual subcategories of the same levels of specificity.

2. A GUI, as in claim 1, where the visual districts are represented as shapes and spatially laid out
10 to show the relationships with one or more of the other visual districts.

3. A GUI, as in claim 2, where the visual districts are represented as concentric shapes.

4. A GUI, as in claim 2, where the visual districts are represented as two dimensional shapes.

5. A GUI, as in claim 1, where the visual categories include any one or more of the following: a product category, a service category, a category class, a category list, a product class, a list of

products in a class, a product specification, a service class, a list of services, a service specification, a social topic, a political topic, an educational topic, and a religious topic.

6. A GUI, as in claim 1, where the levels of specificity include any one or more of the following: category class, category list, offering specification, product class, list of products in a class,

5 product specification, service class, list of services, and a service specification.

7. A GUI, as in claim 1, further comprising one or more nodes located on one or more of the visual districts.

8. A GUI, as in claim 7, where the nodes are differentiated by any one or more of the following ways: a color, a size, a shape.

9. A GUI, as in claim 7, where a user rolls over one or more of the nodes to display node information.

10. A GUI, as in claim 7, where a user selects one or more nodes to execute a node function.

11. A GUI, as in claim 7, where a user expands one or more nodes to expose additional node functions.

15 12. A GUI, as in claim 7, where the node functions include any one or more of the following: providing node information, displaying a menu of one or more other selectable node functions, a

displaying menu of more node information, initiating a chat session, causing a user to be associated with a node location, providing access to sales information, providing access to a salesman, and changing a browser page to one that has information relating to the node.

13. A GUI, as in claim 7, where the nodes have node information that include any one or more of the following: a menu of one or more other selectable node functions and a menu of more node information.

14. A system, as in claim 7, where one or more of the nodes is a landmark that marks a salient location on one or more of the visual districts.

15. A GUI, as in claim 14, where the salient location is fixed and associated with one of the categories.

16. A GUI, as in claim 14, where the salient location can change in time and is associated with an activity.

17. A GUI, as in claim 16, where the activity is any one or more of the following: a current "hot spot", "a list of most popular pages in a computer section", a public chat, a sale, a special product offering, a special service offering, and a sales agent availability.

18. A GUI, as in claim 14, where the salient location is personally meaningful to the user.

19. A GUI, as in claim 14, where the salient location represents any one or more of the following: a user's buddy, a chat buddy, a private chat, a user's favorite spot, and a user with common interest.

20. A GUI, as in claim 14, where a user rolls over the salient location to display salient location
5 information.

21. A GUI, as in claim 20, where the salient location information includes any one or more of the following: salient location identification and one or more salient location functions.

22. A GUI, as in claim 14, where a user selects the salient location to execute a salient location function.

23. A GUI, as in claim 20, where the salient location function includes displaying a menu of one or more other functions.

24. A GUI, as in claim 7, further comprising one or more paths, each path linking two or more nodes and representing one or more connectivity relationships among the nodes.

25. A GUI, as in claim 24, where a path is associated with one of the following: a user's path
15 through one or more of the visual districts, a customer's path through one or more of the visual districts, a preferred path of a group of users through one or more of the visual districts, a preferred path of a group of users with common interests through one or more of the visual

districts, and a preferred path of a group of users with complementary interests through one or more of the visual districts.

26. A GUI, as in claim 7, further comprising one or more node sets, each node set containing one or more nodes clustered in nearby locations in one or more of the visual districts.

5 27. A GUI, as in claim 26, where a node set represents a relationship among two or more nodes located in one or more of the visual districts.

28. A GUI, as in claim 26, where one or more of the node sets is associated with one of the following: a density of users gathered in one or more adjacent node locations, a set of node locations marking results of a search, a set of node locations related by a semantic attribute, a set of area visited by a group of users with common interests, a set of node locations, visited by a group of users with complementary interests, and a crowd of users.

29. A GUI, as in claim 26, where one or more of the node sets has a node set function.

30. A GUI, as in claim 29, where the node set function includes any one or more of the following: providing information about the set, changing a user's location to be associated with a node

15 location in the set, and changing browser page to one that has information relating to a node in the set.